FORECASTING INSURGENCY:

COMMON DENOMINATORS AS TRIPWIRES FOR FUTURE CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

America maintains arguably the greatest military capacity of any nation in the world. Yet this military might has proven unable to anticipate or defeat the insurgent conflicts that constitute the country's longest and most costly wars. This portfolio identifies and tests a set of 'tripwires' for identifying nascent insurgencies. It then prescribes an analytic framework to more rapidly and accurately predict the insurgencies of the future.

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DEFINITIONS

Insurgency:

"an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict."
(US Army Counterintelligence Field Manual)

"an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control."
(US Army Counterinsurgency Field Manual)

"the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region."
(US Department of State Counterinsurgency Guide)

INTRODUCTION

The United States maintains arguably the greatest military capacity, in both the conventional warfare and counterinsurgency domains, of any nation in the world. It has fought epic conflicts with and among capable and determined world powers. It has waged, and won, war on multiple fronts, simultaneously. It has deployed military technology that forever altered the global balance and consequences of war. And yet, America's counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, one it continues to fight today, has persisted longer than any war the US has fought before it, and appears no closer to resolution.

It is no coincidence that the United States' longest wars have been against insurgencies. The idiosyncrasies of insurgency make these conflicts bitter, protracted, ill-defined struggles of resolve. They are nuanced, locally and culturally driven. Their asymmetric and unconventional strategies can, and have, brought seemingly invincible conventional armies to their knees. History may prove that insurgencies are inherently uncontestable.

However, the nations that lose to insurgencies can usually, in hindsight, trace the source of their failure, sometimes back to a single misguided strategic assumption which irrevocably doomed a counterinsurgency. Assumptions about the enemy, their environment, their

motivation, or their resolve are not easily or accurately sorted out in the heat of a rapid-onset counterinsurgency campaign. Most losers in these scenarios would likely identify rushed strategic decisions in the early stages of conflict as cause for their failures.

With the perils of rushed decisions in mind, this portfolio proposes and tests a predictive framework designed to forecast insurgencies sooner and more accurately. It will examine four common denominators, herein referred to as "tripwires", within a sample of insurgencies of the last 60 years: 1) institutional or government failure, 2) economic inequality or economic disruption, 3) underrepresented or persecuted ideologies, and 4) nonpermissive terrain or porous borders. These tripwires will be explored within the existing insurgency literature, then tested against four notable insurgency case studies to assesses their reliability as insurgency precursors.

Based on these findings, the paper will prescribe an analytic framework to integrate insurgency stakeholders, streamline analysis, and codify decision points. This formalized process will, ideally, improve both the accuracy and timeliness of predictive insurgency analysis across the national security enterprise, giving decisionmakers the benefit of strategic warning and preemption.

To be clear, the four variables examined in this paper are not new to discussions of insurgency – historians, academics, and military strategists have debated these and a myriad of other variables for as long as insurgencies have been studied. This paper's uniqueness lies in its examination of these variables specifically as reliable first indicators of imminent insurgency.

The portfolio is also a distinctive attempt to merge the thoroughness and progressiveness of insurgency-related academic research with the utility of actionable defense-sector analysis. Academic research has a necessary role in national security analysis and decision-making, contributing a collective of objective expertise from outside the traditional stakeholder environment (which can be susceptible to groupthink and other pressures.)

However, academic work, from stylistics to fundamental purpose, is often less suited for direct injection into national security decision-making – mainly because it is not intended to be. In this focused, fast-paced, and quasi-militarized environment, academia can appear generic and unfocused.[1] This segment of research and analysis requires a level of synthesis to be useful to policymakers.

[1] David Morgan-Owen, *Approaching A Fork in the Road: Professional Education and Military Learning* (Texas National Security Review, 2018)

Ideally, the prescribed framework will condense academic findings into a concise and defined-but-adaptive format more readily accessible to the defense enterprise. This, with the aim of giving analysts, planners, strategists, and ultimately decisionmakers a new tool to better anticipate, plan for, and commit to the insurgencies of the future.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Variables

This portfolio examines a sampling of 4 insurgency case studies of the last 60 years to establish if the variables (1. Institutional or Government Failures, 2. Economic Inequality or Economic Disruption, 3. Underrepresented or Persecuted Ideologies, and 4. Nonpermissive Terrain or Porous Borders) did or did not precede these insurgencies in their nascent states.

In an effort to produce a flexible and widely applicable framework, and with the inherent uncertainty of strategic analysis in mind, these tripwires are presented without rigid definition. "Institutional or Government Failure," for example, would look vastly different across conflict zones as systems of government and projection of centralized authority will vary wildly. The same deviations could be expected when examining the remaining economic, ideological, and geographic tripwires.

In this proposed framework, the satisfaction of each of the variables is left to the discretion of the analyst or analytic community examining it, as they are presumably armed with in-depth knowledge of their particular regions or analytic disciplines, and are best equipped to determine when a

variable is "tripped" in their area of responsibility. (This model is discussed further in the closing chapter of this portfolio.)

Similarly, these tripwires are presented without prescribed weights within the framework, again in an attempt to produce a flexible analytic model. Whereas in one instance, the degrees of government failure and economic downturn may equally affect the likelihood of insurgency, in another, the degree of government failure may be a drastically more determining factor, and therefore can be weighted more heavily in the overall framework. These determinations must be made on a case-by-case basis, by those well versed in the nuances of the specific portfolios and regions under scrutiny. Again, this discretion is left to the analyst.

Ideally, this high degree of discretion will allow the framework to be applied to nascent conflicts widely while maintaining usefulness and accuracy.

Case Study Selection

The case studies examined were selected based on timeliness (within 60 year scope) and intensity (at least bi-lateral combat operations exceeding a single attack or event which garnered international attention and resulted in battlefield casualties). Among the group of case studies which satisfied these two factors, the Afghan and Iraq insurgencies were chosen for their

timeliness, intensity, and relevance to US policymakers. The Sri Lankan and Colombian insurgencies were chosen at random from a list of global insurgencies compiled by researchers Ben Connable and Martin Libicki.[2]

The data for this project was derived from academic, editorial, and publicly-available United States and foreign government sources.

[2] Ben Connable, Martin Libicki, *How Insurgencies End* (RAND, 2010)

TRIPWIRE 1: INSTITUTIONAL OR GOVERNMENT FAILURE

"If the government fails to listen to your demands,
then you will decide what is best for you."
– Muqtada al Sadr, Iraqi Shi'a Militia Leader

Literature Review

The majority of research consulted for this portfolio observes that an obvious catalyst for insurgency is government failure. Specifically, the research explored below collectively points to 3 indicators of failure: 1) security or defense lapse, 2) government transition, interruption, or collapse, and 3) constituent-perceived failure. Importantly, this discussion of "failure" will include literature on observable government instability and security failure as well as the role of perceived failure in fermenting violence. In the absence of observable failures, wide-spread public perception, quantified through census or polling data when possible, may be assigned greater weight within the framework, while acknowledging that this sentiment may be inconsistently or unobjectively measured.

Gurr's theory of "Relative Deprivation" holds that as the margin between what a populace expects and what it is granted widens, the perception of deprivation (usually levied against the state) eventually reaches a tipping point of hopelessness and violence.[3] Acharya holds that

[3] Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton University Press, 1970)

those neglected populations will be predisposed to insurgency because "rebellion is one of the few ways by which the politically…downtrodden respond to what they perceive as the injustices of state and society." She points to the Maoist insurgency in Nepal as evidence.[4]

As observed by US Army Special Operations Command, governments failing to provide competent security and justice for their populations are more susceptible to insurgency.[5] Akhtar and Sultan expand that government effectiveness, rule of law, corruption, and government-led economic development are correlated with the vulnerability of insurgency, pointing to the Maoist uprising in India.[6]

Paul, Clarke, Grill, and Dunigan assert strong evidentiary support for the degree to which government capacity informs violence. They noted that government actions that do not contribute to substantial new grievances while implementing reforms during an insurgent conflict positively correlate to a reduction in the duration of that conflict. In fact, of the 30 insurgencies examined via their study, the majority were in some part inspired or

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[4] Avidit Acharya, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal and the Political Economy of Violence* (Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, 2009)
[5] US Army Special Operations Command, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies* (2013)
[6] Marium Akhtar; Beenish Sultan, "Insurgencies in South Asia: A Comparative Case Study of India's Maoists and Pakistani Taliban" (Margallla Papers 2015)

instigated by perceived or actual institutional shortcomings.[7] This can lead to what Kilcullen refers to as "feral" populations, or subsets that naturally devolve or deliberately become ungovernable.[8]

Fearon and Laitin found that the likelihood of insurgency increased by 67% in a given country when it experienced government instability ("transition" "interruption" or "collapse") at any point within three preceding years. Functionally, they hypothesize that financially and structurally weak central governments increase the likelihood of insurgency due to ineffective policing, poor power projection, and corrupt counterinsurgency efforts.

On a similar functional level, Collier and Hoeffler argue (inversely) that exceedingly well-funded governments may make rebellion "militarily infeasible."[9] Thus, financially weak governments may be regarded as "militarily permissive."

Of note, neither Fearon and Laitin or Collier and Hoeffler find evidence that degree of national political grievance alone is a reliable predictor of insurgencies.[10] Similarly, Acharya also notes that there is little

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[7] Colin Clarke, Christopher Paul, Beth Grill, Molly Dunigan, Paths to Victory: Detailed Insurgency Case Studies (RAND National Defense Research Institute 2013)
[8] David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains* (Oxford University Press, 2013)
[9] Coller, Paul. Hoeffler, Anke, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War" (Oxford Economic Papers, Oxford University, 2004)
[10] Fearon, James R. Laitin, David D,"Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." (The American Political Science Review, 2003)

quantitative evidence of a causal relationship between political grievance and the frequency of violence.[11] The literature then seems to suggest that government instability and/or functional shortcomings in capacity and services are more reliable predictors than political grievance alone.

To note a competing argument, Malevich and Youngman refute that government stability or strength is related to violent rebellion. They observe that reliance on government or centralized institutions is culturally and often locally driven, citing the highly tribal and decentralized culture of Afghanistan, so argue that functional capacity cannot serve as a reliable indicator for insurgent violence.[12]

Case Study Results

Afghanistan – Preceded by Institutional and Government Failure

Government Transition, Interruption, or Collapse

In 1973, a successful coup overthrew Afghanistan's King Zahir Shah and set the precedent for a pattern of tumultuous overthrows and internal power struggles. In 1978, an opposition group mounted a successful coup against then-president Daoud. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded and

[11] Avidit Acharya, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal and the Political Economy of Violence* (Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, 2009)
[12] John Makevich & Daryl Youngman, "The Afghan Balance of Power and the Culture of Jihad" (Military Review, May-June 2011)

occupied Afghanistan, seizing control over the central government and military until withdrawal in 1988. Simultaneously, the 1980's saw the rise of the Mujahedeen insurgency and influx of al-Qaeda. The mid-1990's saw the ascendance of the Taliban government. In total, this period (1973-1990s) saw at least 5 disruptions or transitions of power, and continuous challenges to sitting government.[13]

In 2001, the U.S. led coalition quickly ousted the sitting Taliban government. This collapse of the sitting administration immediately preceded the onset of the insurgency, which vied to expel foreign military forces and re-establish the Taliban as the governing body.

Security or Defense Failure

Notably, the aforementioned transitions of power were all affected by. violence. The 1973 coup against King Zahir Shah was enabled by Marxist army officers. In 1978, an opposition group mounted a coup against then-president Daoud, killing him, his family members, and supporters in the process.[14] The sitting governments during these transitions proved unable to defend their office via security services or the military, and in fact some forceful transitions were aided by the military.

[13] Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan* (RAND, 2008)
[14] Ibid.

In addition, the Mujahedeen insurgency remained a persistent challenge to central government through Soviet occupation and beyond, later morphing into the Taliban. These forceful overthrows and persistent domestic challenges to sitting governments highlight the ineffectiveness and disunity of the sitting government's security apparatus, and their inability to maintain domestic security.

These failures extended to defense from foreign threats. The 1979 Soviet invasion underscored the military's incapacity to defend its borders and sovereignty. The subsequent influx of 10,000 to 35,000 foreign Mujahedeen and Taliban recruits from neighboring Arab states represents an additional, uncontested foreign threat.[15] The overwhelming US invasion in 2001 further underscored Afghanistan's security failures.

Overall, this period demonstrated the inability of the sitting government and existing institutions to maintain national security and provide for a common defense.

[15] Maria Donnelly, Thomas Sanderson, Zack Fellman, *Foreign Fighters in History* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2001)

Constituent-perceived Failure

Afghanistan's institutions, which have always been fragile, were particularly anemic throughout and following the Cold War, which saw political and government institutions unable to project influence, authority, or services, particularly into rural areas. A general lack of cohesion among the public, paired with high population mobility, likely contributed to a populace disenfranchised from the central government.[16]

Iraq - Preceded by Institutional and Government Failure

Government Transition, Interruption, or Collapse

In 1963, a military-led coup ousted Prime Minister Qasim and replaced him with Abd al-Salam Arif.[17] In 1968, Ba'athists and military sympathizers, including Saddam Hussein, launched a successful coup against President Arif. In 1979, Hussein became president.[18] The following 24 years of Hussein's tenure saw at least 7 coup and overthrow attempts.[19]

In 1991, following a number of assassination and overthrow attempts and Iraq's military failure in Kuwait, Kurdish rebels and Shias attacked

[16] Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (University of Washington Press, 2001)
[17] US Department of State. *Memorandum from Secretary of State Rusk to President Kennedy* (US Department of State, 1963)
[18] Bruce Moon, "Long Time Coming: Prospects for Democracy in Iraq", *International Security, Vol 44, No 4, Spring, pp. 115-148* (MIT Press, 2009)
[19] Lisa Blaydes, "Military Service, Militias, and Coup Attempts", In *State of Repression: Iraq under Saddam Hussein. 266-304. (Princeton University Press, 2018)*

government targets in a nationwide insurgency. Hussein's government would temporarily lose control of 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces before quelling the uprising.[20]

Following the 2003 US-led invasion, with Hussein and many of his top officials in hiding, the Coalition Provisional Authority gradually dismantled what remained of the Iraqi government. (In addition to this structural 'failure', this action also contributed to popular perception of 'failure' discussed later in this section.)

Security or Defense Failure

The 1963 and 1968 coups represent observable security failures of the sitting governments, and the inability of Iraq's state security to maintain the integrity of its government and institutions. More concretely, 1991 saw Iraq fail militarily in the Gulf War, losing one-third of its military manpower and weakening the state security apparatus. The opposition, seeking to capitalize on the opportunity, encouraged the popular uprising to coincide with this security failure. State security services were unable to preempt the subsequent nationwide uprising, though it was quickly subdued.[21] In this

[20] Micha Zenko, *Remembering the Iraqi Uprising Twenty-Five Years Ago* (Council on Foreign Relations, 2016)
[21] Faleh Abd- al-Jabbar, "Why the Uprisings Failed", *Middle East Report, No 176, pp 2-14*, 1992

conflict, the observable failure of state security directly encouraged and enabled the ensuing insurgency.

The 2003 US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq represented the most overt failure of Iraq's defense and security infrastructure in the 60 year scope of this paper. Within the first hours of the military operation, Saddam's government was essentially collapsed, and within weeks, its institutions (including the military) were formally dissolved.[22]

The coalition had intended to serve as an intermediate capability along with reintegrated remnants of Iraq's security forces. However, those remaining security forces were ill-equipped to counter rising crime rates and violence.[23] This security vacuum likely emboldened the ensuing insurgency.

Constituent-perceived Failure

Iraqi public opinion data during the Hussein regime was likely never collected or was closely guarded by the state. In 1982, Hussein rejected a public referendum of support for his government, asserting that he was not like other leaders who "have no position of leadership except by this method." His aim was likely to avoid measuring constituent's support of the

[22] L. Paul Bremer, *Coalition Provisional Authority Order 2* (CPA, 2003)
[23] Andrew Rathmell, Olga Oliker, Terrence Kelly, David Brannan, Keith Crane, *Developing Iraq's Security Sector* (RAND, 2005)

sitting government, amid existing political divisions in the country and within Hussein's own party.[24]

Prior to the Gulf War, Hussein fostered a strong base of popular support rooted in patriotism and Iraqi nationalism. However, with Iraq's defeat and forced withdrawal in 1991, unpopularity of Saddam's government spiked. The subsequent uprising sought to capitalized on this military failure, weakened institutions, and public dissent. [25]

Starting in 1990, the Iraqi government was increasingly constrained by international sanctions. By the 2003 US-led invasion, government services including education, sanitation, and utilities operated at a severe deficit and contributed to the appearance of a government failing to provide its requisite services.[26]

As to the observable failure of government following the 2003 occupation, the formal dissolution of the Iraqi institutions left thousands of seasoned and now disenfranchised government workers without jobs. In this regard, the 'new' coalition-installed government was likley already perceived as "failed" from the perception of those ejected from it. Many former public sector workers, specifically those in security services, entered

[24] Ofra Bengio, *Saddam's World* Oxford Press, 1998)
[25] Faleh Abd- al-Jabbar, "Why the Uprisings Failed", *Middle East Report, No 176, pp 2-14*, 1992
[26] Hans-Christopf Von Sponeck, "Iraq: Burden of US Sanctions", *Economic and Political Weekly, Vol 40, No 47, pp.4902-4905,* 2005

the subsequent insurgency, either as a means of income or for ideological fulfillment.

Colombia - Preceded *by Institutional Failure*

Government Transition, Interruption, or Collapse

Both of the most prominent insurgencies in modern-day Colombia, the National Liberation Army (ELN) and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), were formed in 1964 toward the end of the Colombian Civil War.[27] During that conflict, known as "La Violencia", government administrations transitioned at least 7 times, contributing to an era of governance disruption and instability.[28] This volatility caused Colombia's political culture to adapt, ultimately promoting political parties as substitutes for the dysfunctional central government.[29]

Security or Defense Failure

Throughout *La Violencia,* the Colombian government repeatedly proved unable to maintain domestic security and ensure the safety of its population. This period of conflict saw intense and widespread brutality largely unconstrained by the sitting government, resulting in approximately

[27] Center for International Security and Cooperation, *Mapping Militants* (Stanford University, 2019)
[28] Norman Bailey, "La Violencia in Colombia", *Journal of Inter-American Studies, Vol 9, No 4, pp. 561-575,* 1967
[29] [29] John Coatsworth, "Roots of Violence in Colombia", *Revista, Harvard University, Spring Issue, pp. 3-7,* 2003.

200,000 dead.[30] The warring political parties sought to capitalize on this violence by co-opting and fanaticizing Colombia's peasant class, which grew increasingly reliant on this affiliation for the mutual security it provided.[31] In this sense, the security vacuum left by state intuitions compelled the populace to join, support, and engage in the violence.

Constituent-perceived Failure

In the decades preceding the FARC and ELN insurgencies, the Colombian government suffered from insufficient resources, corruption, and infrequent or disproportionate opportunities for participation.[32] The federal government proved unable to project authority and deliver services in more rural areas of the nation where insurgent groups established themselves. [33] Specifically, the government was largely unable to provide policing, judiciary, education, and utility services in rural regions.[34] Some of these communities were cut off from government infrastructure and services for

[30] RAND (Multiple Authors),"Counterinsurgency Transition Case Study: Colombia" in *From Insurgency to Stability: Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies* (RAND, 2011)
[31] Norman A. Bailey, "La Violencia in Colombia", *Journal of Inter-American Studies, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp 561-575,* 1967
[32] Karina Wong, *Colombia: A Case Study in the Role of the Affected State in Humanitarian Action* (Overseas Development Institute, 2008)
[33] Center for International Policy, *A Compass for Colombia Policy* (2008)
[34] John Coatsworth, "Roots of Violence in Colombia", *Revista, Harvard University, Spring Issue, pp. 3-7,* 2003.

tens of years, likely contributing to a popular perception of complacent or dysfunctional central government.[35]

Sri Lanka – Not Preceded by Institutional or Government Failure

Government Transition, Interruption, or Collapse

Sri Lanka, previously Ceylon, gained independence from British rule in 1948, representing a reset of the nation's government institutions.[36] A functional democracy emerged, with robust institutions and a relatively solvent economy. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam ("The Tamil Tigers" or LTTE) formed and began its violent insurgency in 1976 amid this era of government success and stability, although many of its institutions were later degraded by decades of insurgency. [37]

Security or Defense Failure

In 1962, an attempted coup to overthrow the Sri Lankan government was preemptively disrupted by security services. In 1971, five years prior to the formation of LTTE, an organized and unprecedented uprising, the largest in Sri Lanka's history to that point, was quickly aborted.[38] Although the police and military were unprepared for an uprising of this scale, they

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[35] Michael Igo, "The World Bank presidency and a peace agreement in Colombia: This week in development news" (DevEx, 2016)
[36] Jayshree Bajoria, *The Sri Lankan Conflict* (CFR, 2009)
[37] United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, *A Beautiful Island – Its Bloody Past and Potential Future* (UN)
[38] D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, "The 1971 Insurgency in Sri Lankan Literature in English" in *MFS Modern Fiction Studies, Vol 39, No 1, Spring, pp 131-145,* 1993

consolidated forces, integrated foreign support, and launched a successful counter-offensive, forcing the guerrillas to seek shelter in jungles and more inhospitable terrain. The uprising was unprepared to sustain operations in these environments, and collapsed.[39] The government's timely suppression of the 1971 uprising underscores its domestic security capability at the time.

Constituent-perceived Failure

In the years preceding the formation of LTTE, the Tamil United Liberation Front (the main Tamil political party) used political avenues to express the grievances of the Tamil populace – mainly deficiencies in government services, education, and development. [40] However, according to the 1971 census (preceding the formation of LTTE in 1976), ethnic Tamils accounted for only 9.26% of Sri Lanka's population.[41] This demographic's perception of government failings, in the absence of observable government instability or security failure, are too narrowly represented to be qualitatively significant or reliable for the purposes of this framework. Therefore, the perceptions and grievances of minority Tamils alone, absent sentiment represented in a wider population, cannot satisfy the "government or institutional failure" variable.

[39] G. Samaranayaka, *Political Violence in Sri Lanka, 1971-1987* (Gyana Publishing House, 2008)
[40] Central Intelligence Agency, *Sri Lanka: The Growing Insurgency* (CIA, 1986)
[41] Department of Census & Statistics, Sri Lanka, *Population by Ethnic Group and Census Years* (DCS, 2012)

Findings

	Afghanistan	Iraq	Colombia	Sri Lanka
Security or Defense Failure	✓	✓	✓	✗
Transition/ Interruption/ Collapse	✓	✓	✓	✗
Constituent-Perceived Failure	✓	✓	✓	✗

Table 1: Tripwire 1 Results

Of the four case studies examined in this chapter, three– Afghanistan, Iraq, and Colombia – occurred amid some variant of institutional or government failure. These case studies satisfied all of the sub-variables – security or defense failure; transition, interruption, or collapse of the sitting government, and constituent-perceived failure.

As an outlier, Sri Lanka's insurgency occurred amid a relatively stable and functional national government which did not experience a substantive security failure preceding the insurgency. There was a constituent perception of government failure present, however, as noted previously, this perception was present within too narrow a demographic of the larger population to be significant or reliable for the purpose of this framework.

These results suggest a positive, though not definitive correlation between the variable "institutional or government failure" and the occurrence of future insurgency. The results of the Sri Lankan case study suggest that 100% fulfillment of these environmental features is not

necessary to incubate an insurgency. Specifically, for the purpose of preempting future insurgencies, a determined constituency with perceptions of government failure may still manifest insurgency, despite the lack of observable instability or security failure. The same or similar substitution, then, could be possible for any of the other variables discussed later in this portfolio.

It is conceded other instances of insurgency not examined for this paper likely occurred within functional institutions or non-failed governments. Still, with ¾ of the case studies upholding the variable, this chapter's findings, in the context of the broader portfolio, appear valid: institutional or government failure appears a viable tripwire for future insurgency.

TRIPWIRE 2: ECONOMIC INEQUALITY OR DISRUPTION

"May the voice of those below, those millions and millions of poor who have never counted, may they be listened to, may they decide their future."

– Timoleon Jimenez ('Timochenko'), Former FARC Supreme Leader

Review of Literature

The majority of research discussed below identifies economic factors as a key driver of insurgency. The collective research broadly highlights 3 economic factors, (1) socio-economic disparity and inopportunity , (2) general national economic downturn, and (3) dependency on external or foreign sources of economic welfare.

Fearon and Laitin argue that poverty is one of the three most reliable predictors of insurgency (in concert with large population and instability.) Their research finds that, on average, $1,000 less in per capita income yields a 41% greater likelihood of civil war, annually. The research also holds that, even when examining only the poorest nations at the extreme end of the per capita income range, $1,000 less in income still yields an average of 34% greater annual odds of insurgency. [42]

[42] Fearon, James R. Laitin, David D, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." (The American Political Science Review, 2003)

RAND researchers Christopher Paul, Colin Clarke, Beth Grill, and Molly Dunigan observe economic depravity or disparity as a driving contributor to the majority of 41 insurgency case studies they examined. Among those case studies, the authors find that economic downturn, regardless of previous financial strength of a nation, is a viable predictor of insurgency, as is an economy heavily reliant on external, foreign sources. [43]

US Army Special Operations Command asserts that political violence is more likely to occur in socio-economically deprived countries, and that overall economic development has proven to be a significant predictor of internal conflict. This study goes so far as to expand into sub-genres of economic influences: energy usage, income, infant mortality, and level of male secondary schooling.[44]

Prakarsh Singh of the Institute for the Study of Labor notes a similar 3 economic variables are likely to lead to insurgency. First, lower per capita income or slow economic growth increase the attractiveness of violence as either a source of personal income or outlet for economic grievance. Second, mountainous terrain also proves a statistical predictor of insurgency, as inhospitable regions often lack economic development and opportunity due

[43] Colin Clarke, Christopher Paul, Beth Grill, Molly Dunigan, *Paths to Victory: Detailed Insurgency Case Studies* (RAND National Defense Research Institute 2013)
[44] US Army Special Operations Command, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies* (2013)

to inhibited transportation and access. Third, lower education levels, also coexisting with economically repressed areas, contributes to the likelihood of insurgent violence. Singh observes that, statistically, economic drivers are a more reliable predictor of insurgency than grievance/ideological-based motivators. (The author caveats that this statistic may be due to difficulties in quantifying the other ideological or social variables.) [45]

On the theory of external dependence, Richard Stubbs of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies observes that, prior to the Malayan insurgency, World War II damaged the Malayan economy. This decline and slow rebound contributed to domestic unrest and, ultimately, insurgency. This example suggested that external catalysts for economic decline are just as viable predictors of insurgency as domestic causes, and that the indigenous government need not be the cause of the decline to foster unrest and insurgency.[46]

Collier and Hoeffler substantiate the "economic greed" rebellion and civil wars theory – that some insurgencies are entirely motivated by financial greed, not ideological or political motive. Reinforcing the economic approach to rebellion, they observe that rebellion can generate profit, and the

[45] Prakarsh Singh. Evidence from the Punjab Insurgency. (Amherst College, 2016)
[46] Stubbs, Richard, *Counter-Insurgency and the Economic Factor* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. 1974)

decision to rebel can be seemingly driven by the pursuit or availability of profitable opportunities. [47]

Researchers Beenish Sultan and Marium Akhtar echo Collier and Hoeffler's theory, that economic greed is the main driver of some insurgencies, and that conflict becomes an opportunity to achieve the economic status promised but not delivered by the broader institution or government. They expand on this theory, noting that insurgent groups have historically leveraged the economic divide in their country by coopting the subset of the population left vulnerable by economic deprivation. They point to the Taliban in Pakistan as having exploited this socio-economic divide in tribal areas.[48]

Author and researcher Gretchen Peters also cites the predominately poor Afghan Taliban in his case study, portraying them as indigent men living off the alms of their "constituents" through taxation and donations. However, Taliban leadership (senior, provincial, district, and village-level) often enjoyed comparatively higher personal income than those in government service or private employment, an attractive recruiting and retention tool for the insurgency. The Taliban routinely poached Afghan

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[47] Coller, Paul. Hoeffler, Anke, *Greed and Grievance in Civil War (*Oxford Economic Papers, Oxford University, 2004)

[48] Marium Akhtar; Beenish Sultan, "Insurgencies in South Asia: A Comparative Case Study of India's Maoists and Pakistani Taliban" (Margallla Papers 2015)

police and military members, particularly in rural districts, by offering better pay and benefits for family members that could not be matched by the government.[49]

Journalist Tony Karon observes the same phenomenon in Ireland, Spain, Macedonia, and Palestine – that the insurgencies in these places offer more lucrative employment, particularly for young males, than other options. In Macedonia, rampant unemployment prior to the insurgency almost certainly drove young adults to join the insurgency. In Palestine, the offer of wages and financial incentives for the families of suicide bombers has proven an effective recruiting tool in areas with little economic opportunity.[50]

Some research consulted, however, suggests that economic factors are not predictors or drivers of insurgency, with some sources observing little if any correlation between poverty and insurgency. These sources, as follow, also note that insurgency has occurred in economically-thriving regions, and likewise, has not occurred in economically-depressed or disparate ones.

Professors Alan Krueger and Jitka Maleckova note that there is little direct connection between poverty and the subset of insurgent violence.[51]

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[49] Gretchen Peters, *Seeds of Terror*. (Thomas Dunne Books, 2009)
[50] Tony Karon, The Economics of Insurgency from Ireland to Israel. (TIME, 2001)
[51] Alan Krueger & Jitka Maleckova, "Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There A Causal Connection?" (Journal of Economic Perspectives, Volume 17, Number 4, Fall 2003)

Stanford Professor Avidit Acharya echoes this sentiment, noting that GDP per worker does not have any significant effect on conflict.[52] So, too, do Lieutenant Colonel John Malevich and professor Daryl Youngman, who observe the countless poverty-stricken countries not affected by insurgency, and who note that even those nations who have experienced insurgent violence have often experienced comparatively long stretches of peace.[53]

The aforementioned US Army Special Operations Command material caveats that insurgencies are not solely derived from economic deprivation, explaining that deprivation here contributes to dissatisfaction in other more substantive social contributors to insurgency. [54]

Finally, Singh offers the Punjabi insurgency as an anomaly, in that, the insurgency did not occur in a poor or underdeveloped region, and did not suffer economic downturn prior to the insurgency. He also notes that economic effects were disproportionately borne by women and children, not military-age males, who were ostensibly well-postured socially and economically.[55]

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[52] Avidit Acharya, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal and the Political Economy of Violence* (Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, 2009)
[53] John Makevich & Daryl Youngman, "The Afghan Balance of Power and the Culture of Jihad" (Military Review, May-June 2011)
[54] US Army Special Operations Command, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies* (2013)
[55] Prakarsh Singh, *Evidence from the Punjab Insurgency* (Amherst College, 2016)

Case Study Results

Afghanistan – Preceded by Economic Inequality and Disruption

Socio-Economic Disparity & Inopportunity

In 1974, the Afghan economy saw pockets of rapid development and prosperity. However, it also experienced wide disparity in economic status, driven by an increasingly divergent class system.[56] The majority of the economy was grounded in informal agricultural or small-scale self-employed services.[57]

Between 1975 and 1976, the typically lower socio-economic sectors of agriculture and handicrafts (household services) accounted for 67.8% and 11.1% of nationwide employment, respectively. Compare this to only 3.9% employed in industry, and 5.6% in trade and commerce. The average proportion of the population falling below the poverty line averaged 30% nationwide, with fluctuations as high as 50% in some provinces. [58]

By 2000, the agriculture sector accounted for 79.2% of national employment. Poverty statistics remained consistent, hovering between 25-30% of the national population below the poverty line, with localized

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[56] Maxwell Fry, *The Afghan Economy: Money, Finance, and the Critical Constrains to Economic Development* (BRILL, 1974)

[57] Paul Fishtein, Murtaza Edries Amiryar, *Afghan Economic Policy, Institutions, and Society Since 2001* (US Institute of Peace, 2015)

[58] I.Z. Bhatty, L. Berouti, "A Development Strategy for Afghanistan" in *The Pakistan Development Review, Vol 19, No 4, pp 337-352*, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, 1980.

spikes.[59] Collectively, these metrics suggest a history of socio-economic disparity and poverty.

National Economic Downturn

World Bank data demonstrates economic turbidity since the 1960's, with severe bearish trends from 1979 to 1990, and overall contraction through 2001. In 1994, Afghanistan was the poorest nation in the world, coinciding with the rise of the Taliban. That economic status remained unchanged through the Taliban's tenure as a ruling body as well as the 2001 coalition invasion and subsequent insurgency.[60] This data suggests a gradual but consistent downturn in the national economy prior to 2001.

External Economic Dependency

In 1970, trade accounted for only 21.7% of the country's GDP. Between 1970 and 2001, trade as a percent of national GDP rose from 27.3% to 51.13%.[61] This metric suggests a precipitous increase in dependency on external economic sources in the leadup to the 2001 insurgency.

[59] The World Bank, "*Databank*" (The World Bank, accessed 2020)
[60] Paul Fishtein, Murtaza Edries Amiryar, *Afghan Economic Policy, Institutions, and Society Since 2001* (US Institute of Peace, 2015)
[61] The World Bank, "*Databank*" (The World Bank, accessed 2020)

Iraq - Preceded by Economic Inequality and Disruption

Socio-Economic Disparity & Inopportunity

Under the Saddam regime, Iraq's economic data was protected as a state secret, so available data is of questionable reliability. [62]

Prior to the Gulf War, the oil sector accounted for more than 60% of the country's GDP. The petroleum sector remained the largest sector of Iraq's government, and one of the largest employers in the country, while also the most underemployed. [63] This contributed to a persistent unemployment crisis preceding its insurgency, with approximately 28 percent of Iraq's labor force unemployed in 2003.[64]

In 2003, approximately 55% of the population was estimated to fall below the poverty line. Additionally, a 2003 survey found that roughly 60% of the population relied on government food rations to supplement their daily requirements.[65]

National Economic Downturn

Prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the oil industry is estimated to have accounted for 61 percent of the economy. Following the Gulf War and

[62] Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq Economic Data" (CIA, 2004)
[63] Center for Strategic Studies, *War and the Iraqi Economy: A Case Study* (CSIS, 2015)
[64] Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq Economic Data" (CIA, 2004)
[65] World Food Programme, *Iraq Survey 2003,* in *2003 Iraq Watching Briefs – Overview Report* (UNICEF, 2003)

subsequent sanctions, this sector of Iraq's economy declined precipitously through 1996, yet accounted for up to 90% of government income and 80% of export revenue. [66] Reflecting this decline, the national GDP fell from a high of $179.9 billion USD in 1997 to a low of $19 billion USD in 2002.[67]

External Economic Dependency

In the years prior to 2003, Iraq's state-owned petroleum sector was heavily reliant on export revenue as well foreign equipment and technology. In short, the nation's largest economic sector was heavily reliant on both external enablers and external consumers.[68] Between 1996 and 2003, trade as a percentage of national GDP spiked from 0.027% to 154.235%, indicating an acute economic hyper dependence on foreign trade.[69]

Colombia - Preceded by Economic Inequality and Disruption

Socio-Economic Disparity & Inopportunity

Generalized poverty and wide socio-economic inequality have plagued Colombia for decades. In the 1950s and 1960s, much of the nation's employment and wealth was concentrated in high-income and skilled sectors, with an equally wide inequality between urban and rural areas.[70]

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[66] Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq Economic Data" (CIA, 2004)
[67] The World Bank, "*Databank*" (The World Bank, accessed 2020)
[68] Center for Strategic Studies, *War and the Iraqi Economy: A Case Study* (CSIS, 2015)
[69] The World Bank, "*Databank*" (The World Bank, accessed 2020)
[70] Catherine LeGrand, "Land, Justice, and Memory: Challenges for Peace in Colombia" (Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, 2017)

This inequality peaked in the mid-late 1960's, coinciding with the incorporation of the ELN and FARC.[71]

National Economic Downturn

The 1950s and 1960s saw a devaluation of the nation's currency and a collapse of the economy's prime export, coffee. [72] Heavily reliant on failing exports and restrained by poor infrastructure and narcotrafficking, urban unemployment in the late 1960s trended between 10-14%. [73] The national GDP remained suppressed during the 1960s, ranging between $4.0 and $6.0 Billion USD.[74]

External Economic Dependency

Trade as a percentage of Colombia's national GDP fell from 30.6% in 1960 to 24.6% in 1946.[75] This metric suggests the Colombian economy was decreasingly reliant on foreign trade in the years preceding the formation of FARC and the ELN.

[71] Joel Gillin, "Understanding the Causes of Colombia's Conflict: Inequality" (Colombia Reports, 2015)
[72] CIA Factbook. "Colombia". (2019)
[73] A. Berrv, *Unemployment as a Social Problem in Urban Colombia* (Yale, 1972)
[74] The World Bank, "*Databank*" (The World Bank, accessed 2020)
[75] Ibid.

Sri Lanka- Preceded by Economic Inequality and Disruption

Socio-Economic Disparity & Inopportunity

For a decade prior to the onset of the Tamil Tiger insurgency, poverty and socio-economic inequality in Sri Lanka was in decline. Per capita incomes were evenly distributed across ethnic groups and industrial sectors between 1963 and 1973, and the broader Sri Lankan government was experiencing a time of economic growth. [76]

However, between 1973 and 1979, immediately preempting the onset of the insurgency, these trends had reversed. Economic inequality, both ethnic and by industrial sector, widened, and poverty increased exponentially. [77]

National Economic Downturn

Also during this time frame, the whole of the economy inverted into a bearish trend. This is attributed to the injection of "trickle-down" strategies in the government's economic development model.[78]

Simultaneously, unemployment increased, with most job opportunities centered in government and the public sector. In fact, the public sector expanded over all other key sectors, including industry, agriculture, trade

[76] K. Divisekera. *Income Distribution, Inequality and Poverty in Sri Lanka* (University of Tasmania, 1989)
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

and exports, and banking.[79] However, national GDP increased in the years preceding insurgency, from $2.87 billion USD in 1973 to 3.59 billion USD in 1976. [80]

External Economic Dependency

Between 1972 and 1976, trade as a percentage of Sri Lanka's national GDP increased from 46.2% to 60.4%.[81] This 30% increase suggests a growing dependence on foreign trade in the immediate years preceding the LTTE insurgency. However, trade as a component of the national economy was still dwarfed by the public sector.

Findings

	Afghanistan	Iraq	Colombia	Sri Lanka
Socio-Economic Disparity & Inopportunity	✓	✓	✓	✓
National Economic Downturn	✓	✓	✓	✓
External Economic Dependency	✓	✓	✗	✗

Table 2: Tripwire 2 Results

Overall, economic inequality and/or disruption appears a viable tripwire for predicting future insurgencies. The Afghanistan, Iraq, Colombian, and Sri Lankan insurgencies examined in this paper all occurred

[79] Sirimal Abeyrante. *Economic Roots of Political Conflict: The Case of Sri Lanka* (University of Colombo)
[80] The World Bank, "*Databank*" (The World Bank, accessed 2020)
[81] Ibid.

within the context of varying degrees of economic decline or inequality. Specifically, two of the four case studies satisfied all four components of economic tripwires: (1) the disparity between socio-economic classes, (2) general national economic downturn, and (3) the degree of dependency on externalized or foreign sources of economic welfare, and (4) lack of economic or employment opportunity.

Colombia and Sri Lanka did not satisfy all four variables, as their economies were not dependent upon foreign sources or exports at the onset of insurgency. The result of these case studies suggest that 100% fulfillment of these environmental features may not be necessary to create an economic situation that may incubate insurgency. Specifically, for the purpose of preempting future insurgencies, socio-economic disparity, general economic downturn, and unemployment may prove more reliable predictors, all of which were satisfied in the Colombian and Sri Lanka case studies.

This finding is consistent with the preponderance of literature on the subject of insurgency (predictors, drivers, enablers, etc.) consulted for in this research, which suggested, as a whole, economic factors predicted, enabled, and drove insurgency. This research did not support the competing body of literature which suggests little or no correlation between national economic

circumstances and insurgency. To the contrary, every case study consulted presented varied degrees of economic inequality or disruption.

It is conceded that some instances of insurgency not examined likely occurred within economically equitable and stable nations. Still, this paper's findings, in the context of the broader portfolio, appear valid: economic inequality and/or disruption appears a viable tripwire for future insurgency.

TRIPWIRE 3: MARGINALIZED OR PERSECUTED IDEOLOGY

"If you look at Islamic countries, the people are in despair. They are complaining that Islam is gone. But people remain firm in their Islamic beliefs. In their pain and frustration, some of them commit suicide acts. They feel they have nothing to lose.."

– Mullah Omar, Taliban Founder

Review of Literature

Research is divided on the influences of religion and ideology, both as stand-alone drivers or when underrepresented or persecuted. Equally compelling literature on both sides of the argument held that either: ideology and/or persecution of that ideology was a primary, if not indispensable driver of insurgency; or that ideology (particularly extreme or hyper-exclusive ideology) negatively impacted by insurgency via exclusionary and unrealistic practices.

The literature that affirms the role of ideology in fermenting insurgency generally lends itself to three sub-variables: 1) marginalization, 2) persecution, and 3) political domination.

For a baseline on the role of marginalization and persecution, Horowitz, predicts that those nations that have both a significant ethnic majority and grossly disadvantaged or underrepresented minority are at greater risk for internal violent conflict. Horowitz specifically uses the majority group's domination in political contests or election as a metric for

gauging the necessary disparity for his hypothesis. [82] This finding on "ethnic" disparity can be included in the discussion of the broader "ideological" disparity referenced in this chapter.

Sultan and Akhtar list ideological grievance as one of the most frequent causes of insurgency, Islamic and communist insurgencies at the forefront. They also note that the more ideologically divided a country or community, the more likely an insurgency is to occur.[83]

The US Army Counterinsurgency Field Manual cites ideology as a core organizer and driver of insurgency. It notes that the strongest insurgent ideologies reinforce overtones of injustice and suppression, pointing to Al Qaeda's rhetoric of systemic Islamic repression when promoting the organization's goal of reestablishing the Islamic Caliphate.[84] According to Malevich and Youngman, ideology and culture, not economics, should be regarded as the root cause of insurgency.[85]

However, Acharya observes little correlation between ideology and the onset or intensity of conflict. She found only a weak statistical correlation between ideology and intensity of insurgent conflict in her

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[82] Horowitz, Donald L. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985)
[83] Marium Akhtar; Beenish Sultan, "Insurgencies in South Asia: A Comparative Case Study of India's Maoists and Pakistani Taliban" (Margallla Papers 2015)
[84] US Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Department of the Army, 2006)
[85] John Makevich & Daryl Youngman, "The Afghan Balance of Power and the Culture of Jihad" (Military Review, May-June 2011)

analysis of Nepal's insurgency. She found no evidence of a link between the intensity of ideological grievance and the frequency of violence.[86]

Paul, Clarke, Grill, and Dunigan's case studies went so far as to support the assertion that strong ideology is negatively correlated with insurgency, in that, strong ideologically-driven insurgencies tend to be exclusive and discourage broad participation or buy-in. (Insurgencies, without popular support, are at a severe disadvantage.) Many of these case studies listed departure from staunch ideology and adopted flexibility as a reason for the increased longevity of insurgencies.[87] The US State Department notes that, even though an ideology may organize or motivate a core base of insurgents, ideology will "not necessarily extend across the whole insurgent network."[88] This also makes the case for the importance of ideological flexibility, particularly on matters of recruiting, retention, and internal affairs.

US Army Special Operations Command holds ideology as a "necessary although not sufficient" element of insurgencies. It observes that ideology provides a "common ground" for members of an insurgency, and

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[86] Avidit Acharya, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal and the Political Economy of Violence* (Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, 2009)
[87] Colin Clarke, Christopher Paul, Beth Grill, Molly Dunigan, *Paths to Victory: Detailed Insurgency Case Studies* (RAND National Defense Research Institute 2013)
[88] US Government, *Counterinsurgency Guide* (US Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, 2009)

often justifies insurgent violence. It also notes the positive impact of ideology on recruitment and retention, as ideology both draws recruits to an insurgency, and reinforces their long term commitment to the movement. The same study argues that the strongest and "most immediate" risk factor for radicalization and potential insurgency is the marginalization or persecution of ideology, via government repression, political discrimination, or economic subjugation.[89] So then, ideology may only be a preeminent driver of insurgency when an institution seeks to suppress or persecute it.

Case Study Results

Afghanistan – Preceded by Marginalized, Persecuted Ideology and Political Domination

Marginalization & Persecution

Islamism, the ideological force behind the Mujahedeen and Taliban, directly contradicted most tenants of Afghan leader Muhammad Daoud's vision of Afghanistan's culture and tradition. It's rise in the 1970's represented the ascendance of an ideology actively repressed by the Daoud-era Afghan government. Daoud's presidency ideologically polarized

[89] US Army Special Operations Command, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies* (DOD, 2013)

Afghanistan, and emboldened Islamists, who would attempt several forceful overthrows of his administration. In 1973, Daoud's government ordered the targeting and arrest of members of Afghanistan's Islamist party, forcing them to flee the country en masse.[90]

Following the Daoud era of repression and subsequent Soviet invasion and withdraw from Afghanistan, this Islamist ideology would morph into the Taliban.[91] The movement's ideological framework called for renewed enforcement of the shari'a and rejuvenation of the long-repressed "Islamic character" of Afghanistan.[92]

Political Domination

Amid the Islamist repression of the Daoud administration, the Islamist political party, the Muslim Youth Organization (MYO) had little influence over public policy. Daoud actively repressed competing political movements, effectively turning Afghanistan into a single-party state. The MYO was motivated to violence by this lack of political power and the sitting government's active persecution of Islamist ideology.[93]

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[90] Sharifi, Arian, *Islamist Groups in Afghanistan and the Strategic Choice of Violence* (US Institute of Peace, 2016)
[91] Roy, Oliver, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge University Press, 1990)
[92] Rubin, Michael. *Who Is Responsible for the Taliban* (The Washington Institute, 2002)
[93] Sharifi, Arian, *Islamist Groups in Afghanistan and the Strategic Choice of Violence* (US Institute of Peace, 2016)

Iraq – Preceded by Marginalized, Persecuted Ideology & Political Domination

Marginalization & Persecution

After the Coalition overthrow of Saddam's regime, the Iraqi military and security apparatus remained intact, inundated with Baathist loyalists—well trained, armed, and fervently loyal ideologues responsible for the country's record of human rights atrocities. The Baath party had terrorized the Iraqi people for decades, and its doctrine was decidedly incompatible with the elements of democracy the US would later install. It could not play a role in the new Iraqi government, and was dissolved.

In a sweeping bout of de-Baathification, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) began deconstructing Saddam's government. Over several months, compounding CPA orders dismantled entire sectors of Iraq's public services. Ultimately, an estimated 100,000 Sunni Baathists representing all facets of government would be indiscriminately and unceremoniously fired.

After several years of perceived Sunni marginalization, droves of former security officials gravitated to Iraq's al-Qaeda affiliate, contributing tactical expertise and military-grade equipment to the insurgency. They would later evolve into senior roles in the now-infamous Islamic State insurgency.

Political Domination

In a 2002 referendum, Saddam Hussein, and the Baath party by extension, won a remarkable but infeasible 100% vote of approval by the Iraqi populace, which was likely compelled by fear of political retaliation.[94] This was one of the final codified examples of the Baath party's domination of Iraqi political channels prior to the onset of insurgency.

Colombia – Preceded by Marginalized and Persecuted Ideology

Marginalization & Persecution

In the decades prior to the formation of the FARC and ELN, the Colombian armed forces actively repressed liberalism and non-conservative movements in the country. Violence was prevalent. Fervent liberal and conservative groups clashed while those holding opposing views to the government's model of conservative thought were subject to violence or extrajudicial killing by the military. Ultimately, this ruthless suppression inspired the rise of Marxist and communist insurgent groups.[95]

[94] US Department of State, *Iraq: A Population Silenced* (DOS, 2002)
[95] Central Intelligence Agency, *Banditry and Insurgency in Colombia* (CIA, 1966)

Political Domination

Despite government persecution, the liberals preserved appearances of even representation within government. The Liberal Party maintained a majority of seats in Colombia's Congress during the 1960s and 1970s.[96]

Sri Lanka – Preceded by Marginalized Ideology & Political Domination

Marginalization

Following independence, the ethnic minority Sinhalese began a concerted campaign to marginalize the Timil minority. A 1956 law prohibited Tamils from seeking government employment or public education and made Sinhala the official national language.[97] This law effectively granted control of government and the political process to the ethnic Sinhalese, denying the Tamil a voice in society.[98] In an era of marginalization, these measures specifically gave rise to ethnic tension and, ultimately, the Tamil Tiger insurgency.

Political Domination

The Sinhala dominated government and actively sought to minimize Tamil representation in Sri Lankan politics. The sitting government passed

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[96] Gerald Roland, Juan Zapata, *Colombia's Electoral and Party System* (Berkley, 2000)
[97] Judith Betts, Claire Higgins, *The Sri Lankan Civil War and Australia's Migration Policy Response* (Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies, 2017)
[98] Heather Lee. *Venerating Violence: The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and Post-Civil War Sri Lanka* (University of South Florida, 2014)

legislation which prevented Tamils from participating in some elections and in some instances legally dissolved their citizenship. In 1972, a new national constitution declared Sri Lanka a unitary state, formally centralized political powers at the national level, and reacquired authority previously delegated to Tamil district-level governments.[99]

Findings

	Afghanistan	Iraq	Colombia	Sri Lanka
Marginalization	✓	✓	✓	✓
Persecution	✓	✓	✓	✗
Political Domination	✓	✓	✗	✓

Table 3 Tripwire 3 Results

Overall, ideological underrepresentation and/or persecution has proven a reliable and repeatable insurgency tripwire within the examined case studies. The insurgencies in Afghanistan, Iraq, Colombia, and Sri Lanka of the last 60 years all developed amid acute or long-term ideological repression or persecution.

These case studies suggest that the marginalization, subjugation, or oppression of ideology appears to have a reliably positive impact on the

[99] Chitra Sivakumar, "Social Origins of the Sri Lankan Tamils' Militant Movement" in *Sociological Bulletin, Vol 38, No 1, pp 119-139,* 1989.

likelihood of insurgency formation. This is a more conclusive and predictable finding than was suggested by the literature, which was divided on the role and usefulness of ideology in insurgencies and posited the full range from beneficial and positive to obstructive and negative correlations.

It is caveated that some instances of insurgency not examined for this portfolio likely occurred amid negligible or no ideological repression or persecution. However, this chapter's findings, in the context of the broader portfolio, appear valid: ideological marginalization or persecution appears a viable tripwire for future insurgency.

TRIPWIRE 4: NON-PERMISSIVE TERRAIN OR POROUS BORDERS

"We have our friends and fighters…they are in the jungle…we can continue the fighting years and years; it's not that difficult."

– Selvarasa Pathmanathan, LTTE Leader

Review of Literature

Collectively, the literature held that geography, terrain, and borders played an integral part in enabling insurgencies. Specifically, the literature points to 1) nonpermissive or inhospitable terrain and 2) porous national borders.

Clausewitz seminally notes that in military conflict, terrain offers the advantages of obstructing an enemy's approach and proving cover and concealment for friendly forces, both defensively and offensively.[100]

According to the US Army Counterinsurgency Field Manual, geography contributes to both the likelihood and viability of an insurgency. The manual notes that border areas contiguous to other nations increase the likelihood of foreign support and sustenance to the insurgency.[101] Afghanistan and Pakistan's insurgencies serve as glaring case studies for this argument, as noted by Sultan and Akhtar. [102]

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[100] Clausewitz, Carl von. *Principles of War* (The Military Service Publishing Company, [1812] 1942)
[101] US Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Department of the Army, 2006)
[102] Marium Akhtar; Beenish Sultan, "Insurgencies in South Asia: A Comparative Case Study of India's Maoists and Pakistani Taliban" (Margallla Papers 2015)

Specific to terrain, Acharya argues that less hospitable areas are more conducive to insurgency because the terrain limits the projection of government authority and counterinsurgency response. She notes that, in the Nepal case study, insurgents would have been far less resilient if they did not have the benefit of forests and rugged terrain to aid their evasion of counterinsurgency forces. She also asserts that terrain less cross-sectioned by vehicle roadways is more ripe and statistically more likely to generate insurgency for the same reason. Finally, she hypothesizes that inhospitable terrain positively impacts an insurgency's recruiting and retention, and therefore longevity and intensity, as lack of government security projection compels rural residents to join the insurgency for personal safety.[103] The US State Department echoes this, noting that insurgents respond to government counterinsurgency campaigns by withdrawing to inaccessible terrain, further protracting the conflict.[104]

US Army Special Operations Command notes that mountainous terrain and dense forest offer similar benefits of concealment and evasion to insurgents, noting that nations have gone so far as to deforest areas to flush out combatants. But this study also notes that a number of successful

[103] Avidit Acharya, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal and the Political Economy of Violence* (Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, 2009)
[104] US Government, *Counterinsurgency Guide* (US Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, 2009)

insurgencies survived without particular geographic advantages, particularly urban insurgencies. Here, though, the human terrain (the ability of insurgents to blend in with the indigenous non-combatant populace) can itself be regarded as an advantageous terrain feature. [105]

Case Study Results

Afghanistan – Non-Permissive Terrain and Porous Borders

Non-Permissive Terrain

The Mujahideen formed in the primarily rural, mountainous terrain of Parwan province, while the Taliban formed in the arid Kandahar province bordering Pakistan.[106] The relatively inhospitable and inaccessible terrain in these areas limited the central government's projection of authority, services, and security forces into rural areas. The lack of infrastructure and transportation in these areas made them more permissive for insurgent operations.

Porous Borders

The nation's porous borders have enabled the ebb and flow of militant groups for decades. Iran's border to the west and Pakistan's border to the east have permitted the strategic withdrawal of insurgents, and the injection

[105] US Army Special Operations Command, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies (*2013)
[106] Institute for the Study of War. Understanding War; Afghanistan Project, Regional Commands.

of foreign fighter recruits. Quantifiably, proximity of coalition forces to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border has statistically increased the number coalition fatalities.[107]

Iraq – Non-Permissive Terrain and Porous Borders

Non-Permissive Terrain

Iraq's terrain has proven a key enabler for the insurgency since its infancy. The country's terrain shifts from mountainous in the northeast region to desert in the central and southwest regions. The insurgency took advantage of both urban and rural areas. Urban environments including Baghdad and Mosul presented their own advantages, while rural epicenters of the insurgency were typically inhospitable and difficult to access.[108]

Porous Borders

The porous border between Iraq and Syria allowed both an influx of foreign fighters post-2003, and the strategic withdrawal of ISIS forces in 2017. Without an injection of foreign fighters to counter the coalition occupation, the Iraq insurgency would almost certainly have existed for a shorter time and with less intensity. Likewise, ISIS would have likely

[107] Carter, Timothy Allen and Veale, Daniel Jay. "Weather, Terrain and Warfare: Coalition Fatalities in Afghanistan" (Conflict Management and Peace Science, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 220-239, 2013)
[108] Rhys Dubin, "ISIS 2.0 is Really Just The Original ISIS" (Foreign Policy, 2018)

suffered significant losses after the fall of Mosul had they not had the option of strategic retreat across the border to preserve manpower.[109]

Colombia – Non-Permissive Terrain and Porous Borders

Non-Permissive Terrain

Insurgent groups have taken advantage of other rural, inaccessible areas, specifically in the southern and eastern regions of the country. Their predominance in these areas is in part a result of an ideology more heavily represented among rural Colombians, but has equally served as a security buffer: The terrain and lack of infrastructure has provided these groups safe haven and challenged government security forces' ability to project oversight or conduct operations. [110]

Porous Borders

The border region between Venezuela and Colombia has served as a hotbed of insurgency for decades. The region spans more than 2,000 kilometers of rugged terrain. FARC and the ELN have benefited from external state sponsorship from neighboring Venezuela. Both group's ability to stage within Venezuela and transit the border has significantly enabled

[109] Hassan Hassan, *Insurgents Again: The Islamic State's Calculated Reversion to Attrition in the Syria-Iraq Border Region and Beyond* (Combating Terrorism Center, 2017)
[110] United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, *The Guerrilla Groups in Colombia* (UN)

their longevity and operational effectiveness.[111] Insurgent groups have also benefited from incursions into Peru, Ecuador, and Panama.[112]

Sri Lanka – Non-Permissive Terrain and Porous Borders

Non-Permissive Terrain

Sri Lanka's geography and terrain features heavily enabled the Tamil insurgency there. An island cross-sectioned by the Indian Ocean in the north, the Tamil's northern stronghold Jaffna was isolated, only accessible by sea or narrow land bridges that routinely devolved into a choke point for security forces. Dense forests and mountain regions throughout the island harbored the insurgency and provided a base from which to launch urban operations. Thick canopy and vegetation precluded overhead surveillance and challenged conventional security forces reliant on vehicle-borne combat and troop movement capabilities.

Porous Borders

Given the island's small size, Tamil-controlled territories lacked an adequate buffer from government-controlled areas and security forces, often leaving inadequate terrain for tactical retreats or flanking operations. Utilizing the accessible coastal borders of the island, the insurgency adapted,

[111] "Colombia's New President Calls off Talks with a Leftist Insurgent Group" (Economist, 2018)
[112] Jeremy McDermott, "Colombia's Conflict Spills Over" (BBC, 2002)

developing a crude naval force and using it to traffic weapons, gather intelligence, and conduct naval combat operations. The Tamil Navy became a deciding capability in the longevity of the insurgency, permitted only by the island's accessible and unsecured coastal borders.[113]

Findings

	Afghanistan	Iraq	Colombia	Sri Lanka
Nonpermissive Terrain	✓	✓	✓	✓
Porous Borders	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 4: Tripwire 4 Results

Both the literature and case study data reflected that geography, terrain, and national borders proved to be a highly reliable enabler of insurgencies. All four of the insurgencies examined in this portfolio occurred within what proved to be non-permissive geography or terrain and/or near advantageous national borders. That is, that challenging or inhospitable terrain and/or porous national borders, particularly those shared by harboring or supportive neighbors, not only enable insurgencies, but appear to drive them.

Given that the literature suggests that geography is more an enabler than an instigator of insurgencies, it is included in the prescribed framework

[113] Tomas Lalkovic, *Geographic Factors of Southeast Asian Insurgencies* (Universitas Masarykiana Brunensis, 2018)

as a supplemental tripwire, intended to be used when the previous 3 tripwires produce suggestive but not compelling findings. In that case, this tripwire may be added to (not substituted for) the previous 3 when evaluating a region's ripeness for insurgency.

CONCLUSION

	Afghanistan	Iraq	Colombia	Sri Lanka
Tripwire 1: Institutional or Government Failure	✓	✓	✓	✗
Tripwire 2: Economic Inequality or Disruption	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tripwire 3: Marginalized or Persecuted Ideology	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tripwire 4: Non-permissive Terrain or Porous Borders	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 5: Overview of Case Study Findings

Findings

While distant, localized insurgencies seemingly pose little strategic risk to the United States, history has shown these conflicts have a tendency to project beyond their borders and necessitate global involvement. Insurgency has cost the United States greatly, in terms of money, lives, and time. This portfolio aimed to identify insurgency tripwires and test their reliability and repeatability against insurgencies in Afghanistan, Iraq, Colombia, and Sri Lanka. This, so that decisionmakers can better preempt and potentially mitigate against these costly fights in the future.

The first tripwire, *Institutional or Government Failure*, was widely cited in the literature as both an enabler and a precipitator of insurgencies throughout history. Compared against the aforementioned four case studies,

three of them – Afghanistan, Iraq, and Colombia – occurred amid some variant of institutional or government failure.

Sri Lanka's insurgency occurred amid a relatively stable and functional national government. However, the segment of the population that would later devolve into the insurgent force did not appear to benefit from the government's stability or services afforded to the rest of the population. In other words, the insurgents perceived a dysfunctional, failed government. It could then be argued that the government was "failed" (albeit a matter of perspective) but this case study was considered inconclusive in order to maintain the integrity of the paper.

Still, with 3-out-of-4 case studies upholding the hypothesis, this portfolio found that *Institutional or Government Failure* is a reliable tripwire for predicting insurgencies. The results of the Sri Lankan case study suggest that 100% fulfillment of these tripwires is not necessary to incubate an insurgency, as one still occurred. Additionally, there are almost certainly additional examples of insurgency which occurred despite functional institutions or non-failed governments. Both of these points underscore the discretion required in applying these tripwires in the real-world. That said, this tripwire proved practicable.

The second tripwire, *Economic Inequality or Disruption*, has long been pointed to as a cause for civil rebellion. The majority of literature reviewed in for this paper hypothesized that economic factors, including inequality or disruption, both enabled, and prolonged past insurgencies.

The case studies review upheld this hypothesis: 4-out-of-4 of the case studies (Afghanistan, Iraq, Colombian, and Sri Lankan insurgencies) examined in this paper all occurred within the context of varying degrees of economic decline or inequality. In this regard, *Economic Inequality or Disruption* was assessed to be another reliable predictor of future insurgencies. As with the prior tripwire, it is conceded that some instances of insurgency not examined in this research likely occurred within economically equitable and stable nations. Still, this finding, in the context of and for the purposes of the broader portfolio, appear valid.

The third tripwire, *Marginalized or Persecuted Ideology*, has been an obvious driver of insurgencies throughout history. However, the literature reviewed for this paper was surprisingly split on the impact of ideology on insurgencies. Some sources echoed the expected finding, that repressed ideology was a necessary component to the formation and sustenance of an insurgency. However, some sources argued that ideology can have an

equally detrimental impact on the formation and longevity of a movement, as fervent beliefs often cause interpersonal and institutional friction.

The case studies provided a far more consistent and conclusive finding than did the literature: 4-out-of-4 of the insurgency case studies reviewed occurred amid acute or long-term ideological marginalization, persecution, or political domination. These case studies suggest that the marginalization, subjugation, or oppression of ideology appears to have a reliably positive impact on the likelihood of insurgency formation. As with the previous tripwires, it is stipulated that some instances of insurgency have likely occurred amid negligible or no ideological repression or persecution. However, in concert with the other tripwires proposed, this is likely a reliable and repeatable finding.

4-out-of-4 of the case studies occurred with the benefits of *non-permissive terrain and/or porous national borders*. However, this tripwire is heavily caveated. It is unlikely that an insurgency would arise solely because a group of people live or move within difficult terrain, or find themselves adjacent to a unsecure border. Instead, these geographic features are included as "supplemental" in the framework, and are intended for consideration specifically when decisionmakers are unconvinced of findings based on the previous three tripwires. In that scenario, a group operating

within non-permissive terrain or near porous national borders may tip the scale toward a likely or imminent insurgency.

Applications

As stated in the Introduction, the purpose of this portfolio was to propose and test a useful and actionable framework for analysts and decision-makers. However, upon review, the analytic community is a far more likely consumer of this framework, as the information gatekeepers for senior leaders. Although the insurgency analysis portfolio is shared among dozens of federal entities, the obvious key stakeholders – the Department of Defense, Department of State, and the Central Intelligence Agency – are the day-to-day arbiters of insurgency monitoring and analysis.

These tripwires, incorporated into these key stakeholders' existing strategic analysis framework, could help analysts detect emerging insurgencies amid the firehose of daily global intelligence. This early warning, in turn, enables notification to senior leaders and decision-makers who then have the luxury of monitoring the situation, planning for continencies, and establishing "red lines" that would require US intervention.

The proposed tripwires span multiple pillars of the strategic analysis enterprise. Applying this framework would require an amount of

synchronization among the various analytical disciplines housed within each of the stakeholder agencies. For instance, the *Institutional or Government Failure* tripwire would likely be the responsibility of political and governance analysts, those whose job it is to maintain a thorough understanding of the disposition of a given region or country's domestic politics and leadership. The *Economic Inequality or Disruption* tripwire would be maintained by economic analysts, who track both global and localized economic trends. The *Marginalized or Persecuted Ideology* tripwire is likely best shared between political analysts, who monitor such sentiments in domestic political discourse, and human terrain analysts, who track ground-level social and cultural atmospherics. Finally, the *Non-Permissive Terrain or Porous Borders* supplemental tripwire is likely the work of both geospatial and government analysts.

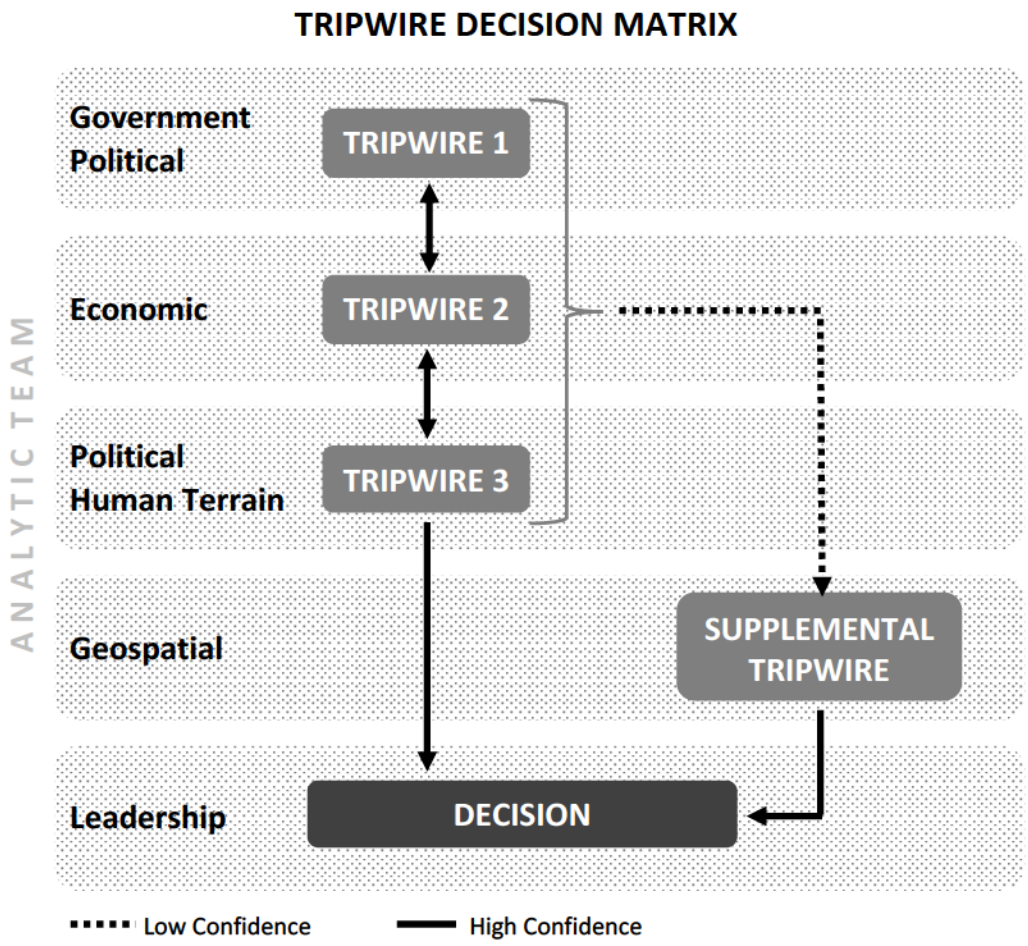

Figure 1

As demonstrated by the decision matrix above, each analytic team maintains their respective tripwires via routine analysis. If a tripwire is triggered, the responsible team coordinates across the enterprise with the holders of the other two tripwires. As additional tripwires are triggered, the corresponding body of evidence builds an increasingly confident assessment that insurgency is likely. If rising to this threshold, analysts will brief the "high-confidence" assessment to mid-level leadership for consideration and ultimate elevation to decision-makers.

However, if all three tripwires are "sprung" and assessments remain "low confidence", the supplemental (fourth) tripwire may be included for analytical consideration. That supplemental tripwire may build enough confidence in assessments to warrant elevation to leadership. Alternately, the assessment will remain uncompelling even with the addition of the supplemental tripwire, in which case the assessment is deemed low-confidence and the monitoring process continues.

Clearly, this framework is not intended as a rigid, "black-and-white" solution to predicting insurgency. Indeed, there are examples of nations which have fulfilled these variables but did not experience insurgency. In forecasting such an ill-defined conflict, the analytic process must acknowledge and embrace the proverbial "gray area" inherent to this type of fight. Though not absolute, these tripwires are indicative of a degree of volatility and vulnerability to insurgency.

It is not a perfect science — there have been and will continue to be insurgencies driven by unforeseeable, localized variables. The most realistic expectation is for a broad but widely applicable framework that identifies the majority of these conflicts before they begin. Hopefully, this framework will achieve just that aim.

RESEARCH GAPS

The body of research consulted for this portfolio failed to address a seemingly obvious variable in predicting insurgency: cultural predisposition to violent conflict resolution.

As an example, some tenants or interpretations of Afghan Pashtun culture appear to sanction violent dispute resolution. With limited to no central government judicial authority present in Afghanistan's rural communities, approximately 80% of all disputes were settled through informal dispute resolution frameworks.[114] These dispute resolution systems are guided by the ethical framework of Pashtunwali ("the way of the Pashtuns"). One of the four pillars of this ethical code is *badal* (revenge) and follows the "eye for an eye" theory of justice. This perpetuates a cycle of violence that can span generations.[115]This cultural proclivity toward violence may have enabled and encouraged the insurgency.

Further quantitative research is needed to weigh pre-existing cultural violence with the manifestation of insurgency. For the purposes of this paper, cultural proclivities to violence were omitted as variables, and would

[114] Toomey, Leigh. Thier, J Alexander, *Bridging Modernity and Tradition: Rule of Law and Search for Justice in Afghanistan,* US Institute of Peace, 2007)

[115] Pfeiffer, Julia. "Traditional Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in Afghanistan and their Relationship to the National Justice Sector" (Law and Politics in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, Vol. 44, No 1. 2011)

need to be researched and discussed separately from the other cultural or institutional variables identified.

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